



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service • Legislative and Public Affairs
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USDA ALLOWS SWEET CHERRIES FROM AUSTRALIA UNDER STREAMLINED PROCESS

WASHINGTON, Feb. 4, 2008--The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) will begin issuing import permits under the agency's new streamlined process for commercial shipments of sweet cherries from Australia into the United States.

The pest risk analysis completed for sweet cherries from Australia was published Oct. 12, 2007. Based upon the analysis, APHIS determined that sweet cherries from Australia can be brought safely into the United States if they meet all five of the designated phytosanitary measures under the new notice-based approval process. To be eligible for importation, the cherries must be part of a commercial shipment that either originates from an APHIS-approved fruit fly-free area or treated in accordance with the regulations. The fruit must be accompanied by a phytosanitary certificate issued by the Australian national plant protection organization certifying that the fruit either originated from a fruit fly-free area or received the required treatment. The certificate also must include an additional declaration that states, "The fruit in this shipment was inspected and found free of *Epiphyas postvittana*." And the shipment is subject to inspection at the port of entry.

On July 18, 2007, USDA published a final rule which streamlined an approval process for importing certain fruits and vegetables under what is known as the Quarantine 56 (Q56) regulations. Q56 pertains to the prohibitions and restrictions concerning the importation of fruits and vegetables into the United States. While this new process continues to provide stringent protections for U.S. agriculture, it employs notices rather than lengthier rulemaking to solicit public involvement in the approval process. It is a less time-consuming approach that allows USDA plant health specialists to focus on more complex domestic and import issues. Under the new process, a commodity becomes eligible if the risk analysis demonstrates that it can be brought safely into the United States subject to one or more of the five designated phytosanitary measures. A notice announcing the availability of the pest risk analysis then is published in the *Federal Register* with the opportunity for public comment. After the comment period ends, all comments are considered and if appropriate, a notice is published in the *Federal Register* announcing that USDA will begin issuing import permits for the commodity.

To learn more about the revisions made to USDA's fruit and vegetable regulations, go to www.aphis.usda.gov and click on the Quarantine 56 hot issues link.

The notice was published in the Jan. 30 *Federal Register* and became effective upon publication.

Note to Reporters: USDA news releases, program announcements and media advisories are available on the Internet. Go to the APHIS news release page at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/newsroom>. Also, anyone with an e-mail address can sign up to receive APHIS press releases automatically. Send an e-mail message to lyris@mdrdlyriss10.aphis.usda.gov and leave the subject blank. In the message, type `subscribe press_releases`.